



Alabama RAC Meeting Minutes

Virtual TEAMS format
8/10/2021
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Forest Service Reps:

Tammy Freeman Brown (DFO), Sheila Holifield (RAC Coordinator), Cherie Hamilton (Forest Supervisor), Andy Scott (Bankhead District Ranger),

RAC Members:

Matt Benefield
Zack Brannon
Dr. Rashidah Farid
Keith Gauldin
Michael Henshaw
Dr. Tina Jones
Dr. Brian Keener

Debby Matthews
Nisa Miranda
Frank Nalty
Steven Newton
Debra Quinn
Renee Raney
Keith Tassin

General Public: none in attendance

The meeting started at 9:00 a.m.

Tammy Freeman Brown, DFO, called the meeting to order. She thanked everyone for making time to attend the meeting and for their patience in using the virtual format. She discussed the importance of the meeting to introduce new members and review their role in the RAC.

She turned the meeting over to Cherie Hamilton, Forest Supervisor, for opening comments. Cherie discussed Alabama as working forests and shared the importance of the RAC. The importance of working with others is to gather that outside perspective and backgrounds along with the knowledge that comes with it. Cherie thanked everyone for attending reiterated how important the RAC is and how it helps benefit the Forest mission.

The meeting was turned over to Sheila Holifield, RAC Coordinator. Sheila welcomed the RAC members and asked each member to turn on their camera to introduce themselves to each other. A quorum was established to proceed with the meeting (14/15).

The meeting was turned over to the Tammy Freeman Brown to provide information on Secure Rural Schools Legislation and RAC Overview to members in attendance. She showed a video on the importance of connecting with the community to care for the land. She explained how Title II funding works and how the RAC committee reviews project proposals to recommend projects to the Forest Supervisor for use of Title II funds. She encouraged members to go out into the community

and share information on the beautiful resources within the state and encourage submission of project proposals.

The meeting was turned over to the Sheila Holifield to discuss the RAC Guidebook. With several new members to the RAC, the Forest Service wanted to provide members a guidebook to ensure everyone is equipped with the background and details of serving on the RAC committee.

The guidebook holds information on: (law, charter, contact listing, meeting notes, Federal Register Notices, payments to the counties, reports for Title I,II,III, briefing papers, news releases, forest information, correspondence).

The meeting was turned over to the Tammy Freeman Brown to share RAC operating guidelines and go over the project proposal process. She expressed to them they can make new guidelines or adopt these existing guidelines. She emphasized the importance of understanding they are the committee and we as the Forest Service support their committee. She discussed the process of electing a chairperson and co-chairperson.

The meeting was turned over to the Andy Scott, District Ranger on the Bankhead National Forest to provide context on previous approved projects happening on his district (Bankhead Ranger District). He shared a presentation with the committee that provided an overview of the Bankhead Ranger District. He then shared information with the committee on previous SRS projects and projects currently being worked through shared stewardship.

The meeting was turned over to the Tammy Freeman Brown to provide information on SRS Funding/Budget. The funding that is available for Title II special projects is \$63,852 (2019) and \$63,570 (2020).

The committee took a 5-minute break and reconvened at 10:40 a.m.

Sheila Holifield opened the meeting back up and provided a presentation on Ethics to members in attendance. Each member viewed the training and will fill out a pledge of conduct form and email to Sheila Holifield.

Upon completion of the Ethics training the meeting was turned over to Tammy Freeman Brown who shared information on the importance of electing a chairperson and the specific role of the chair/co-chair. The meeting was then turned over to the RAC to elect a chairperson and adopt operating guidelines.

During the process of adopting guidelines, the committee posed a question on guideline #4 to get clarification on whether a simple majority can be present for project proposals and to hold meetings. Sheila Holifield said she would send forward that question to the Regional Office and get clarification. After the meeting, clarification was given that each category must have a quorum. Since the original category makeup did not produce a quorum in category C, two members had to be shifted around. A memo was signed and filed.

Debbie Quinn made the motion to approve the operating guidelines as written. Dr. Keener approved the motion and Debby Matthews seconded the motion to approve the operating guidelines with amending #4. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Renee Raney was nominated for co-chair and declined.

Keith Tassin was nominated and declined.

Nisa Miranda was nominated and declined.

The committee nominated Dr. Brian Keener as chairperson and Michael Henshaw as co-chairperson.

Tammy mentioned to the committee the importance of community outreach for project proposal submission and to encourage RAC members to participate and provide input.

The meeting was turned over to the Sheila Holifield to discuss future meeting dates and purposes.

Sheila Holifield committed to putting out a news release in October 2021 to request project proposals for Title II funds for special projects and again at the beginning of the 2022 calendar year. The committee tentatively agreed to meet in the beginning of September 2022 to discuss submitted project proposals.

Cherie Hamilton closed out the meeting with closing remarks and thanked each committee member for their participation and advice.

The meeting was turned over to the Tammy Freeman Brown to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Meeting minutes are posted at:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/alabama/workingtogether/advisorycommittees>